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ABSTRACT

This model of student teacher supervision focuses on providing new lenses through which teacher candidates can view and interpret their own perspectives. The model further assists teacher candidates in broadening their vision to develop an increased awareness of diversity and a need for multiple teaching strategies. This supervision approach includes: self reflection; reflective supervision; reflecting in journals; reflecting on personal teaching; reflecting on action research in which student teachers design an original case study gathering demographic information about an individual child; and reflecting on teaching styles, thinking styles, personal highlights and concerns of the teaching experience, and parenting styles. By examining the way they themselves learn and interact with others, teachers may become more sensitive to individual differences within their own classrooms. University supervisors who model shared reflection and discuss their metacognitive awareness of how they process multiple perspectives can share a rich reflective environment with teacher candidates. The appendix provides a two-part thinking and learning styles model for promoting perspective taking. (LL)

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NEW LENSES FOR SELF DISCOVERY

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NEW LENSES FOR SELF DISCOVERY

Introduction

Teachers view their professional development through a kaleidoscope of past experiences that highlight or distort their perceptions. This model of supervision focuses on providing new lenses through which teacher candidates can view and interpret their own perspectives. It further assists teacher candidates in broadening their vision so that they have increasing awareness of diversity and the need for multiple teaching strategies.

Developing Perspective

An individual's perspective is composed of a complex array of factors (Ross, Johnson, & Smith, 1991). An appreciation of the role an individual's perspective plays in screening and determining how new experiences are interpreted is the cornerstone of the construction of this model. It addresses the growing concern that teachers derive their values and design their own practice based on the methods used to teach them when they were young (Fosnot, 1989). Researchers report that the familiar lecture/ discussion format is by far the dominant teaching modality employed by teacher educators as well as classroom teachers (Howey, 1983). Because of their identification with personal experiences, they quickly equate good teaching with clear, directive communication rather than the facilitation of learner-centered inquiry and investigation (Fosnot, 1989).

To counteract the "dispensing of information" phenomenon, teacher educators are designing new programs for teacher candidates. The principle behind these designs is:

> rather than dispensing a list of prescribed methods of instruction to preservice teachers for their use, these teacher candidates themselves need to be immersed in an environment where they are engaged in questioning, hypothesizing, investigating, imagining, and debating.
>
> Fosnot, 1989, p. 21

Ross, Ashton, and Mentonelli (1989) found that preservice teachers may also have difficulty in putting aside their own perspectives to see and understand the perspectives of the students. Instead they may continue building a case for their own perspectives. The researchers concluded that teacher educators need to carefully plan a coordinated effort to help teacher candidates develop the insight that will enable them to move beyond their early perspectives, and apply their new understanding of educational theory to classroom practice.

Reflection

Self Reflection

Smyth (1989) found that developing a sense of personal biography and professional history encouraged teacher candidates to begin to question teaching practices. This questioning resulted in them no longer accepting teaching actions as natural or common sense and unquestionable. He discussed four sequential stages of reflection:

1. Describing - What do I do?
2. Informing - What does this mean?
3. Confronting - How did I come to be like this?
4. Reconstructing - How might I do things differently?

Reflective Supervision

By carefully selecting the components of a model of supervision, supervisors can provide teacher candidates new lenses to examine their personal perspectives. A reflective supervision model seeks to focus the teacher candidates' attention on the interconnections between their cognition beliefs concerning effective teaching and their daily performance in the classroom. Weekly seminars held during the student teaching internship provide opportunities for teacher educators to help teacher candidates recognize and challenge their guiding perspectives (Ross, Ashton, and Mentonelli, 1989). By discovering new ways to reflect, the candidates gain a broader repertoire and increased insight.

Another level of reflective supervision occurs when the team of university supervisors becomes actively engaged in shared reflection. Following each seminar, the teacher candidates are asked to critique the seminar. The university supervisors then reflect on the insights they had gained during the seminars and review the written comments of the teacher candidates. During these mini-reviews, the guidelines are developed to determine the future seminars.

Just as the reflection of classroom teachers is fostered in a supportive and collegial atmosphere, the university supervisors find that it is very productive to set aside specified time each week to engage in shared reflections about their supervision. Each supervisor is able to offer the other university supervisor new perspective. The identified differences in learning and teaching styles and problem solving approaches emerge as a strength of the team.

Reflecting in Journals

The teacher candidates are asked to maintain journals as a basis for analyzing their own teaching. They are encouraged to write in their journals on a daily basis but are not given a suggested format or topic on which to focus. The university supervisors respond to the journals at least once a week. These responses not only answer questions raised by the teacher candidates, but also pose questions to further their reflection. During the time when they are assuming full responsibility for the classroom, the majority of the teacher candidates include less reflection in their journals. Over the intern period, the journals provide the university supervisors with insights that are useful in helping the teacher candidates move beyond their original perspectives.

Reflecting on Personal Teaching

Prior to the week when they will be assuming total responsibility for the classroom, each teacher candidate is video taped while engaging in an activity with the children. The teacher candidates are asked to analyze their own video tape within forty-eight hours of being taped. They respond to questions patterned after the guidelines developed by Stone and Perez (1989):

1. What happened that you though would occur?
2. What did not happen that you thought would occur?
3. What happened that you had not expected?
4. - What would you do differently: Why?
5. Additional comments, reactions, feelings, questions.

Reflecting on Action Research

At the initial seminar the teacher candidates are asked to carefully observe the children during their first week of student teaching. The Case Study Cycle is presented during the second seminar and the teacher candidates are asked to gather demographic information about the child on whom they wish to focus. Each teacher candidate becomes the designer of an original case study focusing on an individual child.

The components of the cycle include: (a) identifying a child; (b) gathering information; (c) planning strategies; (d) implementing strategies; (e) observing; (f) reflecting on the observations; and (g) continuing or revising the strategies. This action research model is supported by Kasten's (1991) research finding that interest in the individual child was the one concern that persisted throughout the entire internship period.

The third seminar is devoted to developing the individual case studies. The university supervisors facilitate the process of reflection as the teacher candidates work in small groups to

Reflecting on Teaching Styles

During the orientation seminar, the teacher candidates identify their own preferred teaching style utilizing Charles' (1986) definition of facilitative and directive teaching styles. At the second seminar, they reflect on their perception of their clinical supervising teachers' preferred teaching styles. The two people's styles are mapped on a chart representing a continuum from directive to facilitative. Discussion follows concerning possible strategies to accommodate differences in the teaching team.

During the final seminar, the teacher candidates revisit the chart and have an opportunity to reclassify themselves and their clinical supervising teachers' preferred styles. They are encouraged to reflect on changes that they perceive as having occurred during the eight week placement.

Reflecting on Thinking Styles

At the second seminar, the teacher candidates are introduced to Sternberg's (1990) model of thinking and learning styles. They are asked to identify their preferences as a college student by responding to a set of descriptors of study and test taking behaviors. Because they identify easily with the student role, they are able to recognize their dominant mode of operation as defined by Sternberg: legislative, executive, or judicial (See Appendix A). They are then introduced to an application of this model translated into an early childhood environment. Finally, they are asked to reflect on this model during the week and try to identify one incident that demonstrates their predominant thinking style and one incident that demonstrates a child's preferred learning style.

Reflecting on Highlights and Concerns

As the university supervisors worked together, they realized that the teacher candidates often had a different agenda other than the focus that had been planned for a particular seminar. In order to meet the needs of the teacher candidates, the seminar format was changed so that at the beginning of each seminar the teacher candidates share personal highlights and concerns of the week. The discussions become even more reflective when the subjects are asked to write down their highlights and concerns prior to sharing them with the rest of the group. Although the teacher candidates have the option of not sharing their thoughts with the groups, everyone wanted to share. This portion of the seminar is often identified by the teacher candidates as being the most useful.

develop possible strategies. After consulting with the clinical supervising teachers, the teacher candidates begin to implement strategies. The teacher candidates are encouraged to reflect on the case study process during seminars and in their journals. As a culminating activity, the teacher candidates present the results of their case study research at a luncheon honoring the clinical supervising teachers.

Reflecting on Parenting Styles

Parent involvement is a key component of many early childhood programs. Therefore, one of the seminars is devoted to developing appropriate strategies for working with parents. The teacher candidates role play three different parent conference situations. The three different scenarios enable each teacher candidate to assume the role of (a) teacher, (b) parent, and (c) observer of the process. Following the three scenarios the teacher candidates reflect on their feelings as they assumed the different roles. Another component of the seminar involves the teacher candidates examining the possible perspective of their case study children's parents.

Conclusion

Teacher candidates develop their sensitivity to the rich and rewarding differences among students when they are engaged in reflective teaching (Ashton & Urquhart, 1988). By examining the way they themselves learn and interact with others, teachers may become more sensitive to the individual differences within their own classrooms. University supervisors who model shared reflection and discuss their metacognitive awareness of how they process multiple perspectives can share a rich reflective environment with their teacher candidates.

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Appendix A

Thinking and Learning Styles

A Model for Promoting Perspective Taking

Part I

A. **Presentation of Theory:** A brief presentation of the concept of learning styles, as distinguished from abilities; a definition of the three styles; an explainationm of their significance, as a tool to understand people whose styles are different from our own.

B. **Personal Example:** University supervisor shares a situation in which her/his own style impacted perceptions and effectiveness.

C. **Teacher Candidate Application to Self:** Using examples in Sternberg's articles, teacher candidates identify the kind of assignment or type of test that appealled to them in their undergraduate courses.

D. **Specific Age Group Applications:** Develop decriptions of three styles of participation in several learning situations and share with the group.

E. **Follow-up Activities:** Ask teacher candidates to read the article and consider their own predominant thinking style. Ask them to look for an example during the next week that demonstrates either their own preferred style or that of one of the children with whom they work.

Part II

A. **Charting Thinking Styles:** Teacher candidates and supervisors chart their preferred styles and share their examples.

B. **Supervisor Demonstration:** If the leaders of the seminar have different styles, it can be very helpful to describe and demonstrate how they negotiate and benefit from these different Perspectives.

C. **Application and Reflection:** As with all new perspectives, this theory is more useful to some teacher candidates than others. Those who find it meaningful will often use the scheme to describe teachers and/or children with whom they interact.

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